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VISIT TO IRAQ A REWARDING EXPERIENCE

During the early part of December, five of my colleagues from the House of Representatives and I were honored to be asked by the Speaker of the House to travel to Iraq and see first-hand the progress that has been made since the conclusion of major hostilities in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

This trip — my first overseas trip as your congressman — gave me a firsthand view of how this mission is going. More importantly, however,



It was a proud moment to be able to visit with so many South Alabamians who are serving this country in Iraq.

to fight that war in our communities.

Make no mistake: much more work remains to be done. Even the capture of Saddam Hussein (which actually occurred while I was in Baghdad) doesn't guarantee the job will get any easier, at least in the short term. Regardless of this, what we continue to see are exceptional men and

women who are not only an inspiration, but are a model of what good training, adequate funding, and strong public support can mean to the defense of this country.

We should continue to remember the efforts and sacrifices made each day by the hundreds of thousands of men and women in our military, as well as their families and friends here at home. Together, all of them are making an important contribution to winning the war on terrorism and making the world a safer place.



For the first time in their young lives, the children of Iraq have an opportunity to look to the future with optimism and hope.

it gave me the opportunity to visit with many of the fine men and women from South Alabama who are currently serving in Iraq.

To a person, every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine with whom I spoke expressed extreme pride in the job they have done and the role they are playing in taking the war on terrorism to the front steps of the enemy so that we will not have



Safe drinking water will soon be available to millions of Iraqis who have never before enjoyed such a luxury. Shown here are hundreds of miles of pipe being laid across the Iraqi countryside.

1ST DISTRICT BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT OF THE MONTH Mobile Area Wal-Mart Stores

Wal-Mart stores are the flagship retail division of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. As you know, they are a national discount retailer offering a wide variety of general merchandise. In the Mobile area alone, Wal-Mart employs close to 5,000 people, and they have a tremendous impact on our economy throughout the entire First District.

Wal-Mart's community involvement programs are unique and guided by associates who live in the local area and understand its needs. Their associates combine financial and volunteer support to assist organizations that make a positive difference in local communities. In addition, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., has launched several national efforts to help the larger, U.S. community.

Many of the service personnel from South Alabama who are currently stationed in Iraq and Kuwait experienced Wal-Mart's commitment to their community first-hand.

Prior to my visit to those countries in December, several Wal-Mart stores in the Mobile area offered to send close to \$2,000 worth of CDs, CD players, phone cards, chewing gum and a variety of other items. I can assure you the gesture behind those items — especially knowing that they were coming with the love and support from the people back home — meant more than you'll ever know to our friends and neighbors who are currently serving America overseas.

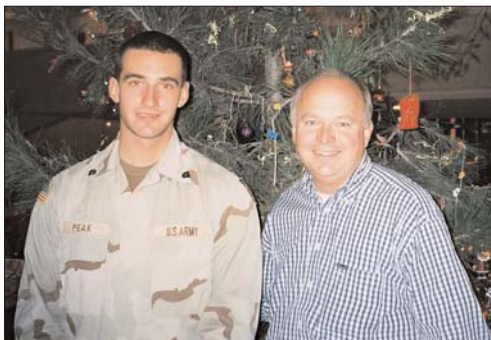
Thank you, Wal-Mart, for your very generous donation to our men and women who serve in Iraq.

MORE PHOTOS FROM VISIT TO IRAQ



Left: One of Saddam Hussein's fishing palaces, along the banks of the Euphrates River, is now home to the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne.

Right: Spc. Andrew Peak, son of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Peak of Mobile, was one of the many brave young faces of the 1165th M.P. Unit out of Fairhope. An Auburn fan, he was especially proud of Auburn's season-ending victory over arch-rival Alabama.



Left: BGen. Abe Turner, a native of South Carolina, was the first person to welcome us to Kuwait City.

Right: Little did we know at the time, but Saddam Hussein was just hours away from capture at the time Capt. Chris Butler of the 1165th M.P. Unit out of Fairhope and I posed for this photo. My dinner with our troops that night was held in a converted barracks that at one time had been a torture chamber used by Saddam Hussein.



From the mailbox...

To: Jo Bonner

Our son, who serves our country through the 1165th M.P. Unit out of Fairhope, called us today to tell us of his lunch with you while you were in the country. He was excited to be given the opportunity to meet you. He said you had lunch below ground under a monument there. I just wanted to say thanks for investing your time to visit our troops overseas. If your visit boosted the other troops' morale like our son, job well done. Thanks for the encouragement you gave him for doing a great job for our country.

From the hearts of my wife and me — "THANK YOU".

Sincerely, A proud dad of a member of the 1165th
December 13, 2003



WORKSHOP FOR HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS SET FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 23

My second annual Workshop for High School Leaders will be held on Friday, January 23, 2004, at the Laidlaw Performing Arts Center Recital Hall on the campus of the University of South Alabama.

This workshop gives government and journalism students the opportunity to question representatives from all levels of state and federal government, as well as members of the Gulf Coast broadcast and print media. It also serves as a way of encouraging the leaders of tomorrow to take an interest in the events shaping the world around them.

We currently have an outstanding slate of guests from all branches of the government and media who are ready to roll up their sleeves and face the tough questions they'll receive from these outstanding high school students.

If you would like specific information on this event, please contact Frazier Payne in my Mobile office at (251) 690-2811 or 1-800-288-8721.

DECEMBER TOWN MEETINGS MADE 60!

In early December, we completed our goal of holding 60 town meetings in various communities throughout the First District.

Everywhere we traveled — from county seats like Bay Minette and Grove Hill, to smaller communities like Fruitdale, Magnolia Springs, Vredenburgh and Pollard — the reception we received was as warm and genuine as the people of South Alabama are themselves.

Special thanks to everyone who took advantage of these meetings to come out and voice their opinions and concerns during the past twelve months. Your involvement and input are an important part of what makes a representative form of government work.

The Town Hall in Pollard, Alabama, was the site for one of our December town meetings in Escambia County.



We were greeted with fine southern hospitality at our first town meeting in Magnolia Springs held at Jesse's Restaurant.

